



<Back |

For Immediate Release
December 22, 2006
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Basrah Children's Hospital provides More Than Healthcare

By James Bullinger
Gulf Region South District

AN NASIRIYAH, Iraq – Of the thousands of reconstruction projects in Iraq, projects that benefit children have special interest.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is leading the construction efforts for the Basrah Children's Hospital (BCH), which when complete, will provide help and comfort to generations of Iraqi children.

Lt. Cmdr. Scott King, a U.S. Navy Civil Engineer Corps officer, is the USACE resident engineer for the BCH project. He leads the BCH Project Office (BCHPO) team, which includes a project engineer, a construction representative, an engineering staff of three, and eight local national engineers.

"The project was originally identified through a 2003 investigation into the state of Iraqi health care by Project HOPE, an international non-profit health, education and humanitarian assistance organization," King said. "The statistics uncovered in the investigation were staggering: Child mortality rates were very high with 150 out of 1,000 children dying before reaching the age of five.

"The incidence of childhood cancer was found to be eight to 10 times more common than in the west, and cancer rates in southern Iraq were even higher than that of the national average," he said. "Statistics such as these made it obvious that a children's hospital with a special focus on pediatric oncology, built in Basrah, would have an enormous positive impact on the country, especially in the southern governorates."

Frederick Gerber, Country Director, Iraq, for Project HOPE said the hospital would fulfill a dire need for health care services to children in Iraq.

"The World Health Organization statistics indicate that 53 percent of Iraqis are adolescents, so we estimate that the hospital will serve more than half of the population of Basrah alone," Gerber said.



More than 70 children participated in a community celebration at the Basrah Children's Hospital recently. The celebration marked the re-commencement of construction of the hospital that will focus on pediatric oncology. Dignitaries from the Government of Iraq and local government officials and community residents participated in the event. [PHOTO]

The BCHPO accepted management responsibility for the hospital's construction at the end of the summer from another U.S. agency, when construction was approximately 30 percent complete.

"Taking over a major construction program midstream with project materials and equipment in various locations across the M has certainly been a challenge," King said. "Thanks to some great cooperation from the previous management team and some from our current team, it's been a reasonably seamless process.

"We've assembled a talented team to move the project forward and are having a lot of success partnering with the contractor, government agencies involved with the project's funding and execution," King added. "The pace has picked up on-site and the is seeing a lot of progress."



Andy Frank, a BCHPO project eng the construction project funding and staffing is a multi-national effort.

"The cost to make the facility fully c is estimated to be \$157.1 million. Th providing about \$95 million, with \$84 the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction F \$11 million from the USAID's Child S Health Fund. The Spanish Governm donated \$22 million. Project HOPE v contribute \$30 million for medical eq training. The Iraqi Ministry of Health to contribute \$10 million to aid portio initial outfitting and operation of the f Frank said.

In addition, Frank said MID-Contra international company based in Amn is the lead contractor for the project. Office also manages two additional c with specialized hospital and medica design and consulting firms out of Jo

Brian Pitt, the lead engineer for the said USACE has the lead role in the



"The Gulf Region South District's E Children's Hospital Project Office wil oversee approximately \$74 million w design, construction, medical equipn procurement and integration, furnish procurement, and facility maintenanc contracts," he said.

"In addition, the project office has th coordinating the efforts of their fellow the project, the Iraqi Ministry of Heal Project HOPE."

According to Frank, the BCH proje in the southwest section of Basrah a constructed on a 71,000 square met

"A specially designed foundation a engineered soil was brought in to pr existing conditions for the hospital cc Frank said. "The project includes a tv 16,350 square meter main hospital f separate 1,000 square meter building provides sleeping accommodations f physicians and nurses, two separate and mechanical buildings at 600 squ each, three separate guard houses, paved parking, a soccer field and a 1 security wall enclosing the site."

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is leading the construction efforts for the Basrah Children's Hospital, which when complete, will provide help and comfort to generations of Iraqi children. The \$157 million project, which is being funded through the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund, USAID's Child Survival and Health Fund, Project HOPE and the Spanish government, will focus on pediatric oncology.. [USACE PHOTO]

The main hospital facility has 94 inpatient beds, 20 outpatient exam rooms, an eight-bed intensive care unit, a seven-bassinet intensive care unit, and four general wards, Frank said.

Other features include two operating rooms, an oncology center; an imaging department with radiography, fluoroscopy, CAT and ultrasound capabilities; an emergency department, and an outpatient endoscopy suite.

Besides the positive health aspects of a new hospital, the project will boost the overall economic prosperity of the region.

"Within the first month of our contract, the project was employing over 400 people on a daily basis including construction work, supervisory staff of over 30 contractor personnel, and over 100 security workers who provide 24-hour site security, said Paul Frank, BCHPO's construction rep.

The project is expected to employ between 450 to 750 workers during the various phases of the project.

Gerber said there will be other benefits as well.

"The children's hospital will have a huge economic impact on the Basrah area, not only with the employees, physicians, nurse ancillary personnel hired and paid by the Iraqi government; but with such supporting industries as food, lodging, supplies, equipment, facilities, grounds maintenance, retail stores, etc., in the surrounding areas," Gerber said. "While the hospital will require a minimum of 100 Iraqis to staff the facility, additional employees will be needed to staff the grounds, kitchen, laundry and other ancillary operations."

The hospital also complements the Basrah Medical College, Gerber said, and will be "a support base for training physicians and other medical personnel in the Basrah Province."

The BCHPO is helping to ensure the success of the hospital when finished by integrating the end-users of the facility into the process.

"There are three Ministry of Health engineers, who will eventually manage the hospital's systems, working full-time alongside quality assurance engineers," King said. "When we turn the hospital over to the Ministry of Health, they'll be much more familiar with the installed systems, facility operations and required replacement parts."

"Going forward, our major challenges will be ensuring the site is properly staffed with the right skill-sets, while integrating the medical equipment and furnishing requirements into the facility construction," King said.

Despite previous funding issues that slowed construction efforts in the past, King said the project is back on track and that construction was more than 30 percent complete at the end of November.

"Construction of the hospital is expected to be completed in the summer of 2008," he said.

Following the installation of medical equipment, commissioning, and the initial outfitting of the hospital, it is scheduled to open to patients in early 2009.

"The completed hospital will deliver much needed specialty medical care to the children of Iraq and serve as a model training facility for the nurses and physicians of the country. It will be a major step towards reducing child mortality rates and improving the health of life of Iraqis – a definite sign of hope for the people of Iraq during challenging times," King said.

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